

TO HER GRACE THE
DUCHESS OF ARGYLL.

MADAM,

YOU being a Native of Hemingford Grey,
in the County of Huntingdon, I am induced with all gratitude to inscribe the following Thanksgiving Sermon to your Grace; from whom I have received the greatest Obligations.
And remain,

May it please your Grace,

Your Grace's most faithful,

obedient, and humble Servant,

Hemingford Grey,
29 July, 1784.

CHARLES DICKENS.



A

THANSGIVING SERMON.

ZECHARIAH viii. 5.

— THE STREETS OF THE CITY SHALL BE FULL OF
BOYS AND GIRLS PLAYING IN THE STREETS THEREOF.

IN this Prophecy (my beloved Brethren,) which consists of a variety of predictive serious matter, we find especially recorded the return of the Jews unto Jerusalem (after seventy years captivity in Babylon); and the mercy of God, towards that *Nation*; wherein is set forth most pathetically, his Lovingkindness to *his People*; and the favour which He sheweth to a *repenting City*, — whose streets shall be filled with Boys and Girls, playing in the streets thereof.

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From this blessed promise to the Jews, made aforetime of God through the mouth of his holy prophet, the present joyful Occasion naturally leadeth us, to be thankful; to bless the name of God for his mercies vouchsafed unto Us, in that the Day of *Mourning*, (the late *bloody, extended, and expensive War*) is now over; and the season of *Prosperity* (the present *necessary and saving Peace*) is at hand; — wherein another scene of Affairs taketh place; and nothing is to be heard (or should be heard) but *Praise and Thanksgiving*: — which, of all religious *Duties*, is the most pleasing and acceptable *Service*, we can at any time *possibly*, render unto God, — who willeth not, that we offer unto Him the flesh of Bulls, or blood of Goats, — but *Praise and Thanksgiving*: — the reasonableness of which, together with its *Use*; and our *Obligations* to it, will appear chiefly from hence, — that it is a debt of *Nature*, as well as a profitable, and a pleasurable *Service*.

The original design of making man (we know, according to *Scripture*) was, that he might praise and laud his *Creator*; and when the world was all *framed, put together, and finished*, — God said; Let us make man in our *Image*, after our own *Likeness*! intimating the want of a new *Creature* not yet *formed*, to behold its *Beauty*, and do honour to its *Builder*: — For, although the Things already *made*, did every one of them in some sense declare, the *Glory of God*, — and shew forth his *handy-work*; yet, the glory

glory was *defective*, and the praise *imperfect*: — wherefore God, did not end his work, 'till the *sixth Day* was over, — wherein He created man, to supply that *Want*.

To him, (God's *best*, his *noblest*, and most *glorious Work*) was originally then given, the full *Dominion* over all *Things* in *Earth*, *Air*, and *Sea*; and he was placed in the world to *contemplate*, to *meditate* upon, and *adore* the *divine Wisdom*, — to offer *Incense* and *Praise*, and give *Thanks*: — So that, the *Reason* with which our minds are *furnished*; — the *faculties* we enjoy above all other *Creatures*, if they do their office *at all*, are not *darkened* and *confused*, — cannot but apprehend God as the *loveliest*, the *best*, and *most perfect* Being; and admire his *perfections*, — which is strictly meant by *praise*; — wherein the first Thing *observable*, is, — that it is usually expressed in such *Terms*, and by such *Words* as signify our owning, our acknowledging and declaring his *Goodness*, — and the *Wonders* He doth for the *Children of Men*.

Thus it was that holy David, and all the Saints have been always used to praise God, — by *confessing* to *Him*, acknowledging and setting forth his *Name*, his *Glory*, his *Wisdom*, and his *Power*, — by daily praising *Him* with *joyful Lips*; by ascribing unto the Lord, *Worship* and *Strength*: So that, whoever will perform this Duty *aright*, — must, as *They* did, confess unto the Lord, and praise his holy *Name*, by telling of his *Salvation* from Day to Day, —

declaring his *honour* unto the *Heathen*, and his *wonders* unto all *People*: — For by the word of the Lord, were the Heavens made; and all the Host of *them*, by the breath of his *Mouth*; — the *Earth* also, and all *Things* therein.

Moreover, it is the voice of Nature, (as far as *Gratitude* itself is so) that the good *Things* we receive from God, the *blessings* which are daily showered down upon us, from the highest Heavens, — should be all sent back thither, in Praise and Thanksgiving; as the *Rivers* run into the *Sea*, and return thither, unto the *Place* from whence they came: — when, who so is *wise*, will ponder these *Things*; and *They* shall understand the Lovingkindness of the Lord.

Let us therefore, (*my Friends*,) on this *Day* especially, which the Lord hath *made*, be joyful and glad in *it*! nor ever cease to act our *parts*, in being *grateful* to praise God in the *Sanctuary*, and proclaim his *Goodness* towards *us*, — the wonders also, which He every where doth for the children of men: — since *This* was the very *end* of our *Creation*; and the purpose, the *chief purpose* of our being sent into this world.

Had man, *I trow*, who was at first created in *Innocence*, continued *stedfast* in that *happy state*, nor had passed or transgressed the *bounds* which God had set, — nor broken his holy *Covenant*, — his *worship* and his *work* had been only praise, *continually*; and nothing had been left for him to do, beyond the enjoying *perfect good*: — For, in *Paradise*

dise originally, was nothing but *Praise*; neither shall there be any thing else, in *Heaven*, — where,

(All that we know, of what *They* do above,
Is that they sing, rejoice, give thanks, and love.) —

But, being now fallen from that blessed state of *Happiness*, — having contracted *Guilt*, and forfeited our *Right* to the divine *Mercies*, — *Prayer* and *Confession* are become necessary to sue out our *Pardon*, to help our *Infirmities*, to blot out the *Handwriting* that is against us; to retrieve our *Loss*, and to restore us to God's *Favour*; — who, upon confession of our *Sins* and *Repentance*, is faithful and just to forgive us our *Sins*, and to cleanse us from all *Unrighteousness*; to restore us to that *happy state*, wherein we shall be able to live for ever, *without them*.

Thus were we originally, All created of God, without *want*, and without *sin*, — to his *Praise*, and to his *Glory*; — and, it will be the end of every *righteous man*, whose Death is so greatly *coveted* of the *wicked*, to praise and glorify God *hereafter*, in the highest Heavens; — which, as it is very natural to desire *Happiness*, we cannot but wish at least, and implore surely, that it may finally be all our *portions*, to sing praises unto our God, and rejoice ever before *Him* in his *House*, where there are many *Mansions*: — For whether there be *Confession*, that shall cease; whether there be *Prayer*, that shall end; — but *Praise* and *Thanks-*

Thanksgiving last for ever: * — The first verily, are *temporary*, — the work of *Sinners*; whilst the last, is *everlasting*, — and the employ of *Angels*: — and the matter, about which it is *conversant*, is always the perfections of the *Deity*, and the divine *Nature*.

Herein too, is shewn the excellence of this *Duty*, and the preeminence it hath over all other parts of *Christian Worship*; — which leads me further, to shew the pleasure and satisfaction there is in performing it; what a good thing it is to sing praises unto our God, — especially at a Time like the *present*, — when, we have so much reason to be *glad*, to *rejoice*, and give *Thanks*: — For, though our Enemies did greatly molest and trouble us, (*some of whom*, we too lightly regarded) by harrassing us in all Quarters the most distant, even in the *East*, and particularly in the *West*, as well as nearer Home, — yea, and at Home; yet God was pleased to be with us, to fight

* The honourable Robert Boyle, Esq; in his Theological Works, observes, — that some men indeed, say more than others, — but none enough on a Subject, *the spirits of just men made perfect*, cannot celebrate. Perhaps, we may think, that because our praises exceed any other Subject, they are worthy of God; but our expressions at the best, can but express our conceptions, which being notions of finite Creatures, cannot reach what is infinite: and though inflamed by that inaccessible Light inhabited by Him, we adore; yet our expressions extend no further than our Devotion, declaring how much we honour Him, — not, what He is; — which none but an infinite Intellect, can do.

However, to praise God, is a Debt which will continue as long as the Obligations, — and can never be paid for want of Coin of just Value.

fight for *us*, and hath saved *us*, by making them finally, to be at *peace* with *us*: — who formerly said, — and by implication certainly, doth to *us*, as to the *Jews*, — that there shall yet be old men and women in the streets of our *Jerusalem*, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age; — that, the streets too of our *Cities*, shall be filled with Boys and Girls playing in the streets thereof.

That it is the most pleasing part, (I need not say,) of our Devotions at *all Times*, to be thankful; — whilst the *best*, the *fittest*, the most *proper* One surely, to praise God, is, when we are *merry*, when we have so much cause to be *so*, — (as on *this Day*) — to express our mirth *solemnly*, with an awful reverence and pious *Hallelujahs* proceeding always from a *lively* and *cheerful Temper*, — whose whole composition is such, as throughout bespeaks *Ease* and *Delight*: — and should indeed, the truly Thankful, be *restrained* — should *They*, whose Hearts overflow with *gratitude*, be prevented shewing it, — it would be *Pain* doubtless, and *Grief* to *them*: whilst then, shall their souls be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when their *mouth* praiseth God, with *joyful Lips*.

O praise the Lord, saith the holy David; for it is a good Thing to sing praises unto our God: — yea, a joyful and pleasant Thing it is, to be *thankful*: — It gladdens and improves all our *Faculties*, and sets the soul on work, to attain *perfection*: — It promotes in *us*, an exquisite and

lively sense of the *divine Honour*, — and an high *Indignation* of mind at every *Thing*, that *profanes* it : — For, what we value, that we *love*; what we *love*, that we *delight* in; nor can ever bear with *patience*, to hear or see it *slighted*, or *abused*.

Thus, our frequent *attention* to the *divine Attributes*, whilst contemplating God's *perfections*, — will discover to us, our own *weakness* and *unworthiness*, — by causing us to see and feel, that we are but *Vanity*; — that verily, all that cometh, is *so*, — which is an excellent, a most useful *Lesson* for those to learn, who are most apt to be *presumptuous*, and *vain*, and *despise others*; who especially, when some little outward *privileges* distinguish them from their *Brethren*, their *Fellow-creatures*, and *Fellow-christians*, — fancy themselves *wiser*, and every way better, in their own *conceits*, — than seven men, that can render a *reason*: Whilst, by considering God's *excellencies* and *perfections*, their proud stomachs must *buckle to*; and they will *learn*, not to think of themselves more *highly*, than they *ought* to think; — but to think *soberly*; and make a God of nothing *else* but the *One eternal, invisible, immortal Being*.

Upon the *whole*, — this *Duty* recommends *itself* to us, by several great and peculiar *privileges*, in that, it is the *end* of our *Existence*, — of our being made and created; the rule and end of our *Nature*; the most excellent part of our *religious worship*: — and endureth for ever.

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Wherefore *They*, who live in the neglect of *it*, — whether *secretly*, or in *publick*, — by no means answer God's end, in making *them*; — which must needs be a great offence unto Him, — to provoke Him to dash them in pieces; as useless *vessels*, — and destroy *them*.

Whereas *They*, who are always praising God, — are always doing the work He made them for, and sent them into the world *about*; and so, always please *Him*: — nor is there any *Thing* pleaseth God so much, as for a man to thank, and praise *Him*: — Who so offereth me *Thanks*, and *Praise*, saith *He*, — he glorifieth *me*.

Neither do any live in his *Favour*, and under his *Protection* so much as *They*, who are always *thankful*, and praise the Name of God not only with *their Lips*, but in *their Lives*.

And if *Moses*, and *Israel*, and *Deborah*, and *Hannah*, and *Jehoshaphat*, praised God for particular Instances of his *Mercy*, — the return of *Peace*, surely, claimeth *Our's*, — that we were not *consumed*, — both *We*, and our *King*.

Blessed be God then, let us All say, — who hath not cast out our repeated *Fastings* and *Prayers*, and *Supplications* for *Deliverance*, but delayed only to answer them, 'till a *Day of Salvation*, and an *acceptable Time*, which is

now *happily come*, — and the Hour of *Prosperity*, (we trust) with it, — wherein the streets of *our City*, of every large *Town*, and small *Village* in *Great Britain*, are full of Boys and Girls playing in the streets thereof ; — where shortly, our *Hope* is, that *Corn* shall make the *young Men* cheerful; and *new Wine* the Maids, — in the time of *Vintage* and *Harvest*. (*Zech. ix. 17.*)

But, let us All, (I beseech you,) take especial care to make the proper uses of *this*, and every other *Blessing*! In the midst of so much real Joy and Gladness, let us learn to be *moderate*, *meek*, and *prudent*; to serve God *faithfully*, *lustily*, and with a *good Courage*! and love one another *sincerely*! when, the *wicked* shall cease from *troubling us*, — and we shall not be ashamed probably hereafter, to *speak again* with our *Enemies* in the *Gate*: — For God indeed, (we know and feel,) hath done great Things for *us*, whereof we have *just reason* to rejoice, — though He hath *deservedly*, very lately *humbled us*, for our *Transgressions*,) — and our *Obligations* to Him, are of the *highest Nature*: — yet, should we be tempted not to *persevere* in our *Duty to Him*, should we not suffer his *Goodness* to lead us to *Repentance*, — our *last Estate*, our latter End will be worse than the *beginning*, — even *All that is past*: — so that, we may expect nothing less than that He should

should make us, a *bye word* among the *Nations*, that are round about us,—if not in the *East*, in the *West*, in the *North*, and in the *South*: and as remarkable *Instances* in future, of his *Wrath* and *Vengeance*,—as we have in former *Wars*, been particularly *Victorious*,—and the *visible Objects* of his *Love and Favour*.

Now, the only *Terms* verily, on which we may reasonably expect the continuance of his *Mercies*, (of his *Loving-kindness* towards us, and particularly that, we Here celebrate in his *holy Temple*, the return of *Peace* again, to our almost ruined *Country*,—to our *distracted*, and sadly *im-poverished One*,—) are our breaking our *Covenant* with *Death*, and our fatal *Agreement* with *Hell*;—our performing our *Engagements* with God, which we *All* entered into, at our *Baptism*; our denying ungodliness and worldly Lusts; our living *soberly, righteously, and godly* in this present world,—by turning unto *Him*, who *ought to be feared*; and doing works *meet for Repentance*; by seconding our *daily Prayers* with our constant *endeavours*, to fulfil his *Will*;—That his great and powerful Name may be hallowed, his glorious Kingdom advanced, and his just Rule over us, and all *Mankind*, be as faithfully submitted to, and his every *Law* observed *Here*, on *Earth*,—as by the *holy Angels* in *Heaven*;—by loving moreover, one another

other without *Dissimulation*:— Since, if God hath made *Us*, to be the *Objects* of his *Love*; why should we not be so, of *one another's*? And, there is no *Fear* in *Love*.

Let us however, (*I pray,*) be as well wise as *Serpents*, as we should be harmless as *Doves*! and in this *our Day*, carefully mark *Those*, who cause *Divisions*, and *Offences* still *among us*, to *distract* us, if not to *ruin* us; (notwithstanding it is *impossible*, but that *Offences* will come; —) and if *possible*, as much as *lieth* in us, let us *carefully avoid them!* Let us suppress too, all those *irregular, headstrong humours and passions* within *ourselves*, or that we daily see *in others*, — which at any Time must dispose *Us* to be easily wrought upon by the *Arts* and *Contrivances* of the *Proud*, the *Ambitious*, the *Crafty* and *Cunning Ones among us*, — who would fain *direct us, lord it over us, and undo us*: — Yea, let us put on, I beseech you, as the *Elect* of God, *holy and beloved* — bowels of *mercy, kindness, meekness, longsuffering*, — forbearing one another, and *forgiving* one another, if any man have a *Quarrel* against *any*; even as Christ forgave *Us*, so, also do *We!* — having within ourselves *effectually*, that *Charity*, which is *kind*, which *envyeth not*, — *vaunteth not itself*, — is not *puffed up*, — *seeketh not her own*, — is not *easily provoked*, — *thinketh no evil*, — *rejoiceth not in iniquity*, but *rejoiceth*

rejoiceth in the *Truth*; — beareth *all Things*, believeth *all Things*, hopeth *all Things*, endureth *all Things*.

When, the God of *Peace*, shall be with *us*, — granting Us in this *World*, knowledge of his *Truth*, — and in the *World* to come, *Life everlasting*.

And, let all the odious *Appellations of Parties*, and *Distinctions*, and *Coalitions* be done away, and lost in *Love*! — That there be no other Contentions left, than those *kind Ones*, — who shall do his *Neighbour*, his *King*, and his *Country*, the *best Service*, — the most *desirable Good*!

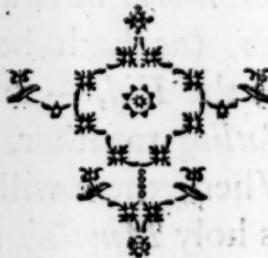
'Thus, and only thus, let all our *Emulation* be to help *one another*! to outdo *one another* in hearty *Affection*; with truly laudable and zealous *Endeavours* for old *England*!

And lastly, may such happy *Agreement* not cease in *us*, 'till the Kingdom of *this World* be swallowed up in Christ's glorious *One*, in which, (as hath been prophesied,) the *Wolf* shall dwell with the *Kid*, — and the *Calf*, and the young *Lion*, and the *Fatling* together, — and a little *Child* shall lead *Them*: — When, there will be no hurting, nor destroying in all God's holy *Mountain*; and the *Rest*, which He shall give to *Mankind*, shall be glorious.

O the *blessed Day*, when these *Things* shall come to pass! May God prepare us all for it by *Faith*, and *Repentance*, and *good Works*, — through *Him*, who was both the *Desire*
and

and Blessing of all Nations,—(Jesus Christ, the righteous —)
our Saviour, our Sanctifier, our Redeemer!

To whom, with the *Father* and the holy *Ghost*, be ascribed all *Honour, Praise, and Thanksgiving in the Church,* world without end. Amen.



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